

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 18932

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: OPEN SEASON ON MICHEL ROCARD: THE SOCIALISTS
PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

REF: PARIS 16757

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SUMMARY. THE BACKERS OF FRANCOIS MITTERRAND, LASHING
OUT AT AN ALLEGED "ROCARDIAN OFFENSIVE," HAVE SUDDENLY
BROUGHT THE SOCIALISTS' INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLE TO THE
PUBLIC EYE. ALTHOUGH THE GENERAL PS REACTION SEEMS ONE
OF ASTONISHMENT AND EVEN EMBARRASSMENT, THE MITTERRAND
FACTION IS PULLING NO PUNCHES ON ITS EFFORTS TO
BRAND MICHEL ROCARD AND HIS SUPPORTERS AS "RIGHT DEVIA-

TIONISTS" WHO NO LONGER ACCEPT THE FUNDAMENTAL THESIS OF THE MODERN SOCIALIST PARTY, THE NECESSITY FOR A "RUPTURE WITH CAPITALISM." THE TIMING OF THE ATTACK IS CURIOUS IN THAT ROCARD HAS MAINTAINED A LOW PROFILE SINCE THE PARTY CONVENTION OF APRIL 29. ONE EXPLANATION, IN THE LIGHT OF THE LEFT-WING CERES' TILT TOWARD PS NUMBER TWO PIERRE MAUROY AND MAUROY'S OWN POSITION OF "NEUTRALITY", IS THAT MITTERRAND SUPPORTERS FORESEE A POTENTIAL REALIGNMENT OF FORCES SOME MONTHS DOWN THE ROAD WHICH COULD TURN TO THEIR OWN DETRIMENT AND TO THE ADVANTAGE OF OTHER FACTIONS. UNABLE TO ASSAIL THE POWERFUL MAUROY, THEY MAY THUS HAVE OPTED FOR A PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE AGAINST ROCARD TO TRY TO PUSH HIM INTO ISOLATION AND THEREBY GUARANTEE THEIR OWN SURVIVAL. END SUMMARY.

1. MITTERRANDISTS ON THE OFFENSIVE: ACCUSING MICHEL ROCARD OF HAVING LAUNCHED AN OFFENSIVE AIMED AT REBALANCING PS FORCES IN HIS OWN FAVOR, THE MITTERRAND FACTION OF THE PARTY HAS SUDDENLY AND UNEXPECTEDLY BROUGHT THE SOCIALISTS' INTERNAL TURMOIL TO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. WHEN MITTERRAND PROCLAIMED AFTER THE MARCH ELECTIONS THAT HIS LOGICAL SUCCESSOR APPEARED TO BE EITHER PIERRE MAUROY OR MICHEL ROCARD, MOST OBSERVERS CONCLUDED THAT THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM WOULD BE WORKED OUT SLOWLY AND CALMLY, LARGELY IN PRIVATE. PS MEMBERS EXPECTED THE SAME AND HAVE THUS BEEN ASTONISHED BY MITTERRAND'S DECISION TO GO PUBLIC IN HIS ANTI-ROCARD CAMPAIGN. ALTHOUGH MITTERRAND SUPPORTERS ARE RELUCTANT TO TALK, OTHER FACTIONS OF THE PS CHARACTERIZE THE OPERATION AS AN OVERREACTION, AN UNFORTUNATE AND UNWISE DECISION.

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2. RIGHT DEVIATION: THE THRUST OF THE MITTERRANDIST ATTACK (IN WHICH MITTERRAND HIMSELF HAS NOT PARTICIPATED PUBLICLY) IS TO CHARACTERIZE ROCARD AS READY TO ABANDON THE TOUCHSTONE OF SOCIALIST STRATEGY, THE COMMITMENT TO A RADICAL "RUPTURE WITH CAPITALISM." IN A BITING INTERVIEW JUNE 7, JEAN-PAUL BACHY (NATIONAL DELEGATE FOR LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT) ACCUSED ROCARD OF PLACING TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON THE MARKET MECHANISM AND NOT ENOUGH ON THE ROLE OF STATE PLANNING: "THE LOGIC OF PS PROGRAMS... DOES NOT INCLUDE THE IDEA OF THE MARKETPLACE AS THE DETERMINANT REGULATING ELEMENT IN DEVELOPED ECONOMIES." ARGUING AS WELL THAT ROCARD ATTACHES NO IMPORTANCE TO NATIONALIZATIONS, BACHY CONCLUDED THAT THE PARTY'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS WERE THREATENED, THAT A FRENCH BAD-GODESBERG MUST BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS -- IN SHORT, THE DANGER IS A CLASSIC CASE OF RIGHT-DEVIATIONISM, WHICH IN PS LANGUAGE MEANS "PROGRESSIVE REFORMS" RATHER THAN

"RADICAL RUPTURE", A WILLINGNESS TO "MANAGE THE CRISIS
OF CAPITALISM."

3. ROCARD'S DEFENSE: ALTHOUGH THERE IS LITTLE QUESTION
THAT ROCARD DOES INDEED FAVOR A MORE "REASONABLE" SOCIA-
LIST PROGRAM, THERE IS LIKEWISE NO EVIDENCE THAT HE IS
ANY LESS ATTACHED THAN OTHER PS LEADERS TO THE TWO PRIN-

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CIPLES WHICH MOST CONDITION PARTY STRATEGY:
-- THE PRESENT IMPOSSIBILITY FOR A SOCIAL-

DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE IN FRANCE;

-- ACCEPTANCE OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT AS AN ELECTORAL TACTIC.

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AS A CONSEQUENCE, CHARGES OF DOCTRINAL INFIDELITY LACK CREDIBILITY, PARTICULARLY WHEN ROCARD IS CONTINUALLY ON THE HUSTINGS DEFENDING THE PS POSITION. THE RESULT IS THAT ROCARD MAY EVEN BE PROFITING FROM THESE RECENT ATTACKS WHICH EXAGGERATE THE STRENGTH OF HIS INFLUENCE WITHIN THE PARTY. WITHIN THE LEFT-WING CERES, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE IS ALREADY SERIOUS OPPOSITION TO THAT FACTION'S DECISION TO COZY UP TO MAUROY IN ORDER TO FORM A "STOP ROCARD" BLOC, WITH SOME MEMBERS OPENLY IN FAVOR OF ROCARD AND OTHERS WONDERING IF HIS TALENTS CAN BE PASSED OVER SIMPLY BECAUSE OF PERSONALITY CONFLICTS. AS REPORTED IN REFTTEL, THERE ARE LIKEWISE EVEN MITTERRAND SUPPORTERS WHO VIEW ROCARD AS THE SOCIALISTS' BEST HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

4. WHY NOW?: THE TIMING OF THE MITTERRAND EFFORT IS INTERESTING BECAUSE ROCARD HAS MAINTAINED A VERY LOW PROFILE SINCE APRIL 29 WHEN SOME OF HIS SUPPORTERS GOT A BIT AHEAD OF THEMSELVES IN PUSHING ROCARD'S CAUSE. YET IT IS CLEAR THAT THE OPERATION IS BOTH COORDINATED AND SERIOUS, INCLUDING TWO OTHER PUBLIC ATTACKS SINCE JUNE 6:

-- DEPUTY PIERRE JOXE ACCUSED THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION FAIRE (CONTROLLED BY ROCARD SUPPORTERS) OF "OPENLY CHALLENGING THE EPINAY STRATEGY;"
-- DEPUTY AND NATIONAL SECRETARY JEAN POPEREN CLAIMED THAT FAIRE HAD "BROKEN THE SOLIDARITY OF PS LEADERSHIP" AND THAT THOSE LEADERS (INCLUDING SO-CALLED INDEPENDENTS LIKE JEAN-PIERRE COT) WHO REMAINED ON ITS EDITORIAL BOARD HAD CLEARLY CHOSEN THE ROCARD CAMP.

5. PATRICK VIVERET (EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF FAIRE AND CLOSE

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COLLABORATOR OF ROCARD) TOLD EMBOFFS THAT ONE OBJECTIVE OF THE MITTERRAND GROUP IS TO FORCE THE ROCARDIANS TO BECOME AN ORGANIZED, RECOGNIZED CURRENT, THUS UNDERMINING THE EXISTING IMAGE OF ROCARD AS A VAGUELY UNIFYING ELEMENT APPEALING TO A BROAD CROSS-SECTION OF THE RANK AND FILE. THE END RESULT WOULD BE A ROCARD MO-

TION AT THE PARTY CONGRESS NEXT SPRING WHICH, IN FAILING TO WIN MORE THAN 15-20 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, WOULD TARNISH HIS IMAGE AS A RALLYING POINT FOR THE PS AS A WHOLE AND RELEGATE HIM TO THE ROLE OF FACTIONAL CHIEFTAIN, IN THE SAME MANNER AS CERES LEADER JEAN-PIERRE CHEVENEMENT. VIVERET CONTENDS THAT ROCARD HAS THUS FAR RESISTED THESE PRESSURES WELL, AS SHOWN BY THE DECISION OF BOTH MAUROY SUPPORTERS AND INDEPENDENTS (SUCH AS COT) WHO REFUSED TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF MITTERRAND BACKERS IN RESIGNING FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF FAIRE.

6. VIVERET DOES NOT RULE OUT A ROCARD MOTION AT THE PS CONGRESS, BUT SAID THE DECISION WOULD BE MADE ONLY AFTER THE TWO UPCOMING CONVENTIONS (NOVEMBER AND FEBRUARY) WHERE THE POTENTIAL BALANCE OF FORCES WILL BECOME CLEARER. IN NOVEMBER, FOR EXAMPLE, MAUROY WILL PRESENT HIS PROPOSALS FOR DEMOCRATIZING THE PARTY (E.G., ALL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS SHOULD BE ELECTIVE) AND THUS RUN HEAD-ON INTO THE VESTED INTERESTS OF MITTERRAND BACKERS WHO ARE GROSSLY OVER-REPRESENTED IN THE UPPER ECHELONS OF THE PS, WHILE ROCARD AND THE CERES LEND SUPPORT. IN FEBRUARY, HOWEVER, THE NEW "SOCIALIST PROJECT" MAY WELL PRESENT OTHER LINES OF DIVISION IF THE CERES CONTINUES WITH ITS LEFT-WING ORIENTATION AND IF ROCARD'S PRAGMATISM ATTRACTS SUPPORT FROM AMONG BOTH MAUROY AND MITTERRAND FORCES. THE SITUATION IS THIS SO FLUID AS TO RENDER PROJECTIONS OF RELATIVE STRENGTH MEANINGLESS, PARTICULARLY SINCE POSITIONS WILL FLUCTUATE DEPENDING ON THE ISSUE AT HAND.

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7. THE MITTERRAND FACTOR: THE ONE STABLE FACTOR, HOWEVER, IS THE CONTINUING POPULARITY OF FRANCOIS MITTERRAND WITHIN THE PS AND HIS TOTAL COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE OF THE PARTY WHICH HE HAS BUILT. EVEN MITTERRAND, HOWEVER, MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE LEADERSHIP QUESTION, AND WITH IT THE SOCIALISTS' FUTURE, IS NOW OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE, EVEN IF THE FINAL DECISION IS AT LEAST A YEAR OR MORE AWAY. EVIDENCE OF MITTERRAND'S CONCERN CAN BE FOUND IN HIS UNUSUAL VISIT TO ROCARD'S MUNICIPALITY (CONFLANT-SAINTE-HONORINE) ON JUNE 5 FOR A TETE-A-TETE

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LUNCHEON WHOSE SUBSTANCE REMAINS SECRET, BUT WHICH
OBVIOUSLY MUST HAVE TOUCHED ON THE SUCCESSION QUESTION.

8. FOR ROCARD AND MITTERRAND, AS FOR SOCIALISTS OF ALL
FACTIONS, THE SUCCESSION ISSUE CANNOT BE DIVORCED FROM
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THE PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST OF 1981. NEW LEADERSHIP MAY
BE INEVITABLE, BUT THE TIMING IS CRITICAL LARGELY BE-
CAUSE THE PS CANNOT AFFORD TO FINISH SECOND TO THE COM-
MUNISTS IN 1981'S FIRST ROUND. THUS, AS DISTASTEFUL AS
THE PROSPECT OF A THIRD DEFEAT FOR THE PRESIDENCY MIGHT
BE, MITTERRAND MUST STILL CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY

SERIOUSLY, ESPECIALLY IF NO OTHER PS CANDIDATE APPEARS CAPABLE OF DEFEATING THE PCF ENTRY. THAT CONSIDERATION ALONE ARGUES FOR DELAYING THE DECISION ON THE SUCCESSION, BUT OBVIOUSLY RUNS COUNTER TO THOSE IN THE PS WHO FAVOR LAUNCHING A NEW GENERATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

9. IN THE MEANTIME, THE ROCARD CHALLENGE IS REAL IN THAT HE REPRESENTS THE ONLY VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO A MORE OR LESS STATIC CONTINUATION OF PS DOGMA OF THE PAST SEVEN YEARS. HIS EMPHASIS ON PROGRAMMATIC CREDIBILITY RINGS TRUE FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF SOCIALISTS WHO BLAME (AT LEAST PARTIALLY) THE UNREALISTIC NATURE OF THE COMMON PROGRAM FOR THE LEFT'S DEFEAT LAST MARCH. ALTHOUGH THIS REALISM IS NOTHING MORE THAN A RECOGNITION THAT EVERYTHING CANNOT BE DONE AT ONCE BY A SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT, IT CAN NONETHELESS BE TAKEN AS A CHALLENGE TO PS STRATEGY AND HAS THUS BEEN CONDEMNED AS "PROGRESSIVE REFORMISM."

10. WHETHER OR NOT SUCH CONDEMNATION WILL BE EFFECTIVE REMAINS TO BE SEEN. VIVERET CLAIMS, AS DO SOME CERES, MITTERRAND AND MAUROY SUPPORTERS, THAT ROCARD'S APPROACH WILL ULTIMATELY BE ADOPTED BY THE PS SIMPLY BECAUSE IT IS THE MOST COHERENT AND RATIONAL. THAT IS NOT TO SAY THAT ROCARD HIMSELF WILL BE THE MAN TO IMPLEMENT THAT POLICY, ALTHOUGH HIS POSITION WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE STRENGTHENED. BUT IN ANY CASE, ACCORDING TO VIVERET, ROCARD'S

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FUTURE IS DEFINITELY IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY BECAUSE ONLY A LARGE POLITICAL MACHINE HAS ANY SERIOUS CHANCE OF SUCCESS IN THE PRESIDENTIALLY-DOMINATED FIFTH REPUBLIC. HOWEVER, WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A SLOW, CAREFUL MARCH TOWARD CONTROL OF THE PS IS NOW BEING EGGED ON TOWARD MORE PRECIPITOUS ACTION BY THE SUPPORTERS OF FRANCOIS MITTERRAND. ALTHOUGH IT WOULD SEEM TO BE IN THE INTEREST OF NEITHER ROCARD NOR MITTERRAND TO ENGAGE THE BATTLE AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE GAUNTLET HAS BEEN CAST AT ROCARD'S FEET. WHILE THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT IT WILL SIMPLY BE ALLOWED TO LIE THERE QUIETLY, ITS VERY EXISTENCE AT THIS EARLY DATE INDICATES THAT THE SUCCESSION ISSUE WILL NOT BE AN EASY ONE.

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